



## **How Patients Should Destroy Unwanted Medications**



The information provided below was provided by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in a guideline they published on October 15, 2009. The information provided by the FDA has been combined with the requirements for the state of Missouri. This information is for patients who want to dispose of unwanted medications and this information does not apply to health care practitioners who must dispose of unwanted controlled substances in a manner required by law in State Regulation 19 CSR 30-1.078.

Patients should first determine if their medication is a controlled substance or if their medication is not a controlled substance. Patients can learn this from their pharmacist. The instructions below provide information that non-controlled drugs can be mixed with other waste and discarded with the household trash. Drugs that are controlled substances should be flushed down a sink or toilet.

Medicines play an important role in treating certain conditions and diseases, but they must be taken with care. Unused portions of these medicines must be disposed of properly to avoid harm. Non-controlled drugs can be thrown away in the household trash after mixing them with some unpalatable substance (e.g., coffee grounds) and sealing them in a container such as plastic bag or bottle with a sealable lid.

However, certain medicines are controlled substances and may be especially harmful and, in some cases, fatal in a single dose if they are used by someone other than the person the medicine was prescribed for. For this reason, a few medicines have special disposal directions that indicate they should be flushed down the sink or toilet after the medicine is no longer needed. If you dispose of these medicines down the sink or toilet, they cannot be accidentally used by children, pets, or anybody else.

You may have received disposal directions for these medicines when you picked up your prescription. If your medicine is on this list, and you did not receive information on disposal with your prescription, you can find directions on how to dispose of the medicines at DailyMed. After you search on the drug name, the disposal information for these medicines can be found in one of the following sections of the prescribing information:

- Information for Patients and Caregivers
- Patient Information
- Patient Counseling Information
- Safety and Handling Instructions
- Medication Guide

It is important to note that disposal by flushing is not recommended for the vast majority of medicines. Unused or expired medicines that do not have flushing directions in the label can be disposed of safely in the household trash by:

1. Mixing them with something that will hide the medicine or make it unappealing, such as kitty litter or used coffee grounds.
2. Placing the mixture in a container such as a sealed plastic bag.
3. Throwing the container in your household trash.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Can I donate unused medications to another person?**

It is not recommended to donate medications to others. There is no guarantee that the medications have not been contaminated, adulterated or stored at the wrong temperature or correct level of light. It is also prohibited by state and federal law to transfer the possession of controlled substances. No controlled substances may ever be donated or shared. All unwanted controlled substances should be destroyed. Patients should never return their unwanted controlled substances to the practitioner that prescribed them.

### **Didn't the state of Missouri enact legislation to implement take-back programs?**

Yes. The state of Missouri has enabling legislation that would allow certain medical practitioners to establish and operate take-back programs for the redistribution of certain medications. The website for these Drug Repository Programs is at [www.dhss.mo.gov/DrugRepository](http://www.dhss.mo.gov/DrugRepository). At this time, the BNDD is not aware of any take-back programs that are operating in Missouri.

### **Why do the medications on the list have flushing directions for disposal?**

The medicines on this list of medicines recommended for disposal by flushing are safe and effective when used as prescribed, but they could be especially harmful to a child, pet, or anyone else if taken accidentally. Some of the possible harmful effects include breathing difficulties or heart problems, possibly leading to death. For these reasons, FDA advises that flushing these medicines down the sink or toilet is currently the best way to immediately and permanently remove the risk of harm from the home. FDA continues to work with and encourage the manufacturers of these medicines to develop alternative, safe disposal systems.

### **How should you dispose of medicines not found on the list?**

Do not flush all medicines down the toilet. The FDA recommends that most medicines be disposed of in the household trash after mixing them with some unpalatable substance (e.g., coffee grounds) and sealing them in a container. Unused portions of medicines must be disposed of properly to avoid harm.

### **Does flushing the medicines on the list down the toilet or sink drain pose a risk to human health and the environment?**

We are aware of recent reports that have noted trace amounts of medicines in the water system. The majority of medicines found in the water system are a result of the body's natural routes of drug elimination (in urine or feces). Scientists, to date, have found no evidence of harmful effects to human health from medicines in the environment. Disposal of these select, few medicines by flushing contributes only a small fraction of the total amount medicine found in the water. FDA believes that any potential risk to people and the environment from flushing this small, select list of medicines is outweighed by the real possibility of life-threatening risks from accidental ingestion of these medicines.

## **MEDICINES RECOMMENDED FOR DISPOSAL BY FLUSHING**

This list from FDA tells you what unused or expired medicines you should flush down the sink or toilet to help prevent danger to people and pets in the home. Flushing these medicines will get rid of them right away and help keep your family and pets safe. FDA continually evaluates medicines for safety risks and will update the list as needed.

### **Medicine**

**Actiq**, oral transmucosal lozenge  
**Avinza**, capsules (extended release)  
**Daytrana**, transdermal patch system  
**Demerol**, tablets \*  
**Demerol**, oral solution \*  
**Diastat/Diastat AcuDial**, rectal gel  
**Dilaudid**, tablets \*  
**Dilaudid**, oral liquid \*  
**Dolophine Hydrochloride**, tablets \*  
**Duragesic**, patch (extended release) \*  
**Embeda**, capsules (extended release)  
  
**Fentora**, tablets (buccal)  
**Kadian**, capsules (extended release)  
**Methadone Hydrochloride**, oral solution \*  
**Methadose**, tablets \*  
**Morphine Sulfate**, tablets (immediate release) \*  
**Morphine Sulfate**, oral solution \*  
**MS Contin**, tablets (extended release) \*  
**Onsolis**, soluble film (buccal)  
**Opana**, tablets (immediate release)  
**Opana ER**, tablets (extended release)  
**Oramorph SR**, tablets (sustained release)  
**Oxycontin**, tablets (extended release) \*  
**Percocet**, tablets \* Acetaminophen;  
**Percodan**, tablets \* Aspirin;  
**Xyrem**, oral solution

### **Active Ingredient**

Fentanyl Citrate  
Morphine Sulfate  
Methylphenidate  
Meperidine hydrochloride  
Meperidine hydrochloride  
Diazepam  
Hydromorphone hydrochloride  
Hydromorphone hydrochloride  
Methadone hydrochloride  
Fentanyl  
Morphine sulfate; Naltrexone hydrochloride  
Fentanyl citrate  
Morphine sulfate  
Methadone hydrochloride  
Methadone hydrochloride  
Morphine sulfate  
Morphine sulfate  
Morphine sulfate  
Fentanyl citrate  
Oxymorphone hydrochloride  
Oxymorphone hydrochloride  
Morphine sulfate  
Oxycodone hydrochloride  
Oxycodone hydrochloride  
Oxycodone hydrochloride  
Sodium oxybate

\*These medicines have generic versions available or are only available in generic formulations.

For specific drug product labeling information, go to DailyMed or [Drugs@FDA](mailto:Drugs@FDA).

### **Contact the FDA:**

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